

TRANSFORMATION STARTS WITH US: What are the opportunities for agroecology at the territorial level in Italy?

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LOCATION: 72 Hours of Biodiversity Festival – SCANDICCI, ITALY



Agroecological transitions do not occur only through technical innovations but through relationships among farmers, communities, researchers, advisors, activists, and institutions, as well as through the struggles, knowledge, and care practices embedded in specific places.

To address this and foster community-building processes in Italy, 25 people from 8 Italian regions, united by similar questions and interests, gathered in sunny Scandicci, Florence.

Aim of the participatory workshop

The workshop “Transformation starts with us. What are the opportunities for agroecology at the territorial level in Italy?” was facilitated by Anna Frosini, Chiara Brusatin, Ilaria Bruno, Irene Katsaros and Marcello Maggioli. Together with the 5 facilitators, a total of 20 participants took part, representing diverse regions of Italy and bringing a wide range of perspectives. The group was broadly composed of individuals engaged in agroecology both as a scientific field and as a social movement, with a significant presence of researchers, technical advisors and activists.



The group of facilitators who designed the workshop first met at the [Agroecology Europe Forum 2025](#) in Malmö, where they began reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of agroecology in their respective countries. This initial exploration, mapping active initiatives, identifying limitations, and recognising existing spaces for action, highlighted the need to strengthen connections and build a more cohesive network. Given the inherently territorial nature of agroecology, it quickly became evident that one of the major challenges in Italy is the lack of structured links among the many actors working in this field. It was with this awareness that the idea took shape of organising a workshop within the framework of the 72 Hours of Biodiversity festival - a space already populated by precisely those actors whose connections needed strengthening.

The location: Festival 72 Ore di Biodiversità

The 72 Hours of Biodiversity (*72 Ore di Biodiversità*) is an annual festival organised by Rete Semi Rurali ETS, an association based in Scandicci (FI), dedicated to the dynamic management of cultivated agrobiodiversity and the promotion of agroecological food systems. Now in its fifth edition, the festival brings together farmers, researchers, civil society organisations, activists, and citizens around the shared themes of biodiversity and agroecology, in a format that weaves together public debates, thematic workshops, music, and collective conviviality.

This year's edition carried a particular significance: the 15th Forum of Let's Liberate Diversity (EC-LLD) was hosted within the festival's programme. This co-presence gave the event an explicitly international dimension, connecting Italian grassroots initiatives with European agroecological networks and seed sovereignty movements, turning a locally rooted festival into a meeting point across national boundaries.

Within this programme, four thematic workshops were organised around a shared thread: territory, supply chains, transformation, and technology. Each opening a space for dialogue on different dimensions of the agroecological transition.





By bringing together diverse actors working at the territorial level, this workshop sought to create a collective space for dialogue, mutual learning, and co-creation, contributing to the enactment of agroecological transformation of food systems and the human and non-human communities that sustain them. Through various initiatives, the aim was to give participants the chance to get to know each other and generate connections to foster the agroecological transformation of our territories.

Methodology

During the workshop, a combination of participatory and experiential methods was employed to foster exchange, reflection, and collective analysis among participants. An *agroecological bingo* activity opened the session, creating an informal space for sharing personal experiences and breaking the ice across diverse backgrounds. This was followed by a collective mapping exercise using sociometric techniques, which enabled an open dialogue across generations, places of origin, and areas of expertise. Participants then engaged in thematic working groups where a tailored adaptation of the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis supported the identification of challenges, opportunities, and shared priorities. The workshop concluded with a collective *return of results* moment, allowing the group to consolidate emerging connections, highlight key insights, and reinforce a sense of shared direction.

Each group worked through a SWOT-inspired framework; the analysis was used as a shared vocabulary to surface situated knowledge, name common struggles, and recognise existing resources across territories. Groups rotated through the four dimensions with each table facilitated to encourage reflection, personal testimony and dialogue. The emerging themes were then brought back to the plenary, where participants collectively consolidated the key points. The shared insights produced across the groups are as follows:

STRENGTHS (S)

- Variety and diversity of agricultural products
- Effective alternative food networks
- Cultural heritage
- Universities as spaces for aggregation and practical application: more curricula integrating agroecology
- Intersectionality: the connection across all dimensions is strong in Italy

WEAKNESSES (W)

- Movements have a limited lifespan
- Internal conflicts constrain national and political convergence
- Access to land
- Monocultures
- CAP: continental-scale planning for local needs

OPPORTUNITIES (O)

- Reclaiming abandoned spaces
- Filling the void left by rural depopulation
- Enhancing integration with minority communities
- Taking care of one's own food
- Connecting communities: arts, crafts, agriculture

THREATS (T)

- Loss of awareness and knowledge
- Extreme climate events
- Lack of recognition of biocultural heritage
- Insufficient or excessive rainfall
- Soil erosion and land consumption
- Limited access for young people to resources
- Pollution and biodiversity loss

Collective reflecting moment and closing

The workshop closed with a collective restitution moment. Participants were invited to embody the role of a watershed, as a living and relational territory, identifying themselves in different elements within it, like sources, affluents, animals or bottlenecks. This imaginative exercise made the interdependencies and tensions between actors working at different scales visible, and prompted reflection on where energy



flows, where it stagnates, and what conditions allow it to circulate more freely. Building on this, a sociometric exercise invited participants to physically position themselves in relation to a map of Italy, marking not only where they are currently active but also where they would like to extend or deepen their engagement. The session concluded with an open exchange of contacts, ongoing projects, and future intentions, planting the seeds for collaborations to continue well beyond the workshop itself. As a final “thank you”, participants received a taste of the agroecological products of local organic farms [Podere Montisi](#) and [Fattoria Bucolica](#).

Outcome

The workshop was a success, and it contributed both to the rich programme of the 72 Hours of Biodiversity Festival and to the experience of those who took part in it.

The workshop reinforced the movement and networks among youth in Italy at different territorial levels (by getting to know each other and leaving space for self-definition and facilitated connection).

Participants embodied and self-reflecting on who they are, what their role is, and what their impact at the territorial level can be (inspired by and feeding into the re-dynamisation of the AEEU Youth Network around its 3 pillars: communication, policy, and territorial agroecology). The workshop focused on all three, in line with the work that is being carried out by the youth network, which was started at the AEEU Forum 2025 in Sweden.

Specifically, the outcomes of the participatory workshop can be outlined as follows:

1. Youth energy and willingness to engage: Young people have the desire and the strength to network and contribute on the front lines of the agroecological transformation in Italy.
2. Recognising existing biocultural heritage: A great deal already exists; there is a need to recognise this biocultural heritage and put it to good use.
3. The fragmentation challenge: There's a need to overcome fragmentation, while it's effective at responding to specific local needs, it can sometimes prevent a strong national and political convergence.
4. The need for inclusive dialogue spaces: There's a greater need for spaces of dialogue that facilitate exchange between individuals and communities. Experimenting with more inclusive methods helps the group express itself in a more collective, "choral" way.

These outcomes have been achieved through the collaborative approach, the organisers' facilitation during the workshop and the dynamic involvement of the participants.

Policy recommendations

The outcome of the workshop and the powerful messages shared by the 20 participants point towards one direction: the need for public policies to acknowledge and support the work of all agroecological actors across the value chain, starting with the young farmers. The following are some policy recommendations derived from the discussions and the SWOT analysis:

1. Strengthen the recognition and protection of Italy's agricultural biocultural heritage through policies that support local seed varieties, traditional knowledge, and community-based stewardship practices.
2. Develop and implement policies that facilitate young people's access to land, agricultural tools and equipment, and knowledge-sharing opportunities, enabling their active participation in the transition towards sustainable food systems.
3. Consider gender perspectives and the intersecting challenges faced by LGBTQI+ communities, women, and racialised individuals in agricultural and rural contexts.
4. Enhance bottom-up coordination at the national and European levels to link and support territorial agroecology initiatives, while respecting the unique characteristics, needs, and contexts of each territory.

5. **Build on the momentum created at EU level** – including President von der Leyen’s 2024 call for all Commissioners to take action for youth, and the youth dialogues subsequently launched by Commissioner Hansen – by translating this political attention into concrete support: increased EU funding streams for young and territorial agroecological actors, and stronger integration of youth and territorial agroecology priorities into EU agricultural and rural development policy.

About Agroecology Europe

Agroecology Europe is a non-profit European association intending to place agroecology high on the European agenda of sustainable development of farming and food systems. The association fosters interactions between actors in sciences, practices and social movements, by facilitating knowledge sharing action. It aims at the creation of an inclusive European community of professionals, practitioners, and more generally societal stakeholders in agroecology.



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